

Examining the Oath

I (name) do solemnly swear (or affirm):

Signifies a public statement of commitment. You are accepting responsibility for your actions. (Integrity First and Service Before Self)

That I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States: You are not swearing to support the President, the Country, the flag or a particular service, but rather the Constitution which symbolizes all of these things. (Airman's Creed)

Against all enemies, foreign and domestic: We must always be prepared for current and future wartime operations. (Service Before Self and Airman's Creed)

That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same: Civilians pledge allegiance to the nation, not a military service or organization (Service Before Self).

That I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion: Your word is your bond! Without integrity the moral pillar of our core values is lost. (Integrity First and Airman's Creed)

And that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter: Promising to give it our all. (Excellence in all we do and Airman's Creeds)

So help me God (optional): Signifies truth and commitment to what you have sworn to in the oath. It is a call to a higher being or divine agency to assist with ensuring your own integrity and honest. (Integrity First)

The Oath of Office

"I, (*state your full name*), do solemnly swear (*or affirm*) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well; and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God (optional)."

U.S. Air Force
HQAETC/A9

The Oath of Office Civilian



**You know the Air Force
Core Values and you
know the Airman's
Creed...**

**But, do you truly
understand the Oath of
Office and all it means?**

Purpose:

As an Airman who has taken and possibly administered the Oath... How well do you understand the history, importance and significance of the words of this oath?

All Airmen take an oath upon entry into the service. Civilians take the Oath upon appointment. Officers take the Oath of Office upon commissioning and renew that oath with each promotion. Enlisted members take the Oath of Enlistment upon entry and again each time they re-enlist.

The purpose of this document is to equip you with some background information. We challenge you to take this information and educate those taking the oath on just how important the act of swearing to support and defend our Constitution is.

When taking the oath we must better understand its significance and how it ties into our core values, our Airman's Creed, and our Profession of Arms.

Use this tool and apply it the next time you are asked to perform an oath of office, a re-enlistment or officer promotion, reemphasize their purpose as an American Airman!

History of the Oath

As Federal civil servants, we take an oath of office by which we swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. The Constitution not only establishes our system of government, it actually defines the work role for Federal employees - "to establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty."

The history of the Oath for Federal employees can be traced to the Constitution, where Article II includes the specific oath the President takes - to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." Article VI requires an oath by all other government officials from all three branches, the military, and the States. It simply states that they "shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support the Constitution." The very first law passed by the very first Congress implemented Article VI by setting out this simple oath in law: "I do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) that I will support the Constitution of the United States."

The wording we use today as Executive Branch employees is now set out in chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code. The wording dates to the Civil War and what was called the Ironclad Test Oath. Starting in 1862, Congress required a two-part oath. The first part, referred to as a "background check," affirmed that you were not supporting and had not supported the Confederacy. The second part addressed future performance, that is, what you would swear to do in the future. It established a clear, publicly sworn accountability. In 1873, Congress dropped the first part of the Ironclad Test Oath, and in 1884 adopted the wording we use today.

Our oath is more than a formality that adds flair to a commissioning or promotion ceremony. It provides the foundation of our military.

